

5. (Amended) A heat shrinkable label for product containers comprising:

at least two elongated webs of a heat shrinkable laminate, each web provided with a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end along each web, each web having opposite side edges defining a width, a leading end and a trailing end; and

at least one elongated, clear, heat shrinkable splice tape having top and bottom surfaces and an adhesive on the bottom surface, the adhesive adhering the splice tape to a portion of one web adjacent the leading end and to a portion of another web adjacent the trailing end such that the splice tape extends transversely to the webs across a majority of the width defined by the webs to form a continuous web,

each of the webs and the at least one splice tape having bi-directional shrinkage characteristics selected to provide longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs such that, upon application of heat to a label and splice tape, the label shrinks along with the splice tape without causing substantial distortion to the printing on the label.

6. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the splice tape is adhered to the ends of the webs over the printing thereon.

7. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the laminate material of the webs comprises a polypropylene film.

8. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5, wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of two plies of polypropylene film.

9. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the material of the splice tape comprises a polyethylene film.

10. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 9 wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of a polypropylene film.

11. (Amended) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein each web is provided on a separate roll.

12. (Amended) A method of labeling a product container comprising the steps of:  
providing first and second elongated webs of heat shrinkable label material each having opposite sides defining a width, a leading end and an opposite trailing end;

providing a heat shrinkable splice tape including an adhesive on a surface defined by the splice tape;

aligning the trailing end of the first web with the leading end of the second web such that the ends abut one another;

adhering the splice tape to a portion of the first web adjacent the trailing end and to a portion of the second web adjacent the leading end to extend transversely to the webs across a majority of the width defined by the webs so as to form a continuous web.

13. (Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein the splice tape is transparent.

14. (Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein each of the provided webs comprises:

a first laminate of heat shrinkable material;

an adhesive in contact with the first laminate;

ink in contact with the adhesive; and

a second laminate of heat shrinkable material in contact with said ink, the first and second laminates having substantially equivalent shrinkage characteristics.

15. (Amended) The method according to claim 14, wherein the splice tape and each of the laminates of the webs has bi-directional shrinkage characteristics selected to provide longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs.

18. (Amended) A label for a container comprising:

first and second web segments of heat shrinkable material, each web segment having opposite first and second end edges defining a length therebetween;

the second end edge of the first web segment juxtaposed to and aligned with the first end edge of the second web segment; and

a splice tape including a heat shrinkable portion defining a surface and a coating of an adhesive on the surface, the splice tape overlapping a portion of each of the first and second web segments adjacent the aligned end edges, the adhesive coating of the splice tape securing the splice tape to the first and second web segments to form a single continuous web,

the length of the first and second web segments selected to provide a heat shrinkable container label having a closed cross section of a predetermined perimeter length when a portion of the first web segment adjacent its first end edge is secured to a portion of the second web segment adjacent its second end edge.

19. (Amended) The container label according to claim 18 wherein each of the web segments defines a first surface and an opposite second surface and wherein the splice tape is secured to the first surface of the web segments.

20. (Amended) The container label according to claim 18 wherein each of the web segments defines a first surface and an opposite second surface and wherein the splice tape is secured to the second surface of the web segments.

21. (Amended) A label for a product container comprising:

first and second elongated label webs each having a terminal end portion;

a splice tape comprised substantially of heat shrinkable material, the splice tape adapted to overlap a terminal end portion of each of the first and second webs with the webs arranged in an abutting relationship; and

an adhesive layer for securing the splice tape to the terminal end portions of the first and second webs.

22. (Amended) A heat shrinkable label for a container comprising:

at least two elongated webs each including a heat shrinkable laminate, each web having opposite side edges defining a width and a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end longitudinally along each web, each web having a leading end portion and a trailing end portion;

an elongated splice tape having a length and opposite side edges defining a width and comprised substantially of heat shrinkable material; and

an adhesive coating on a surface defined by the splice tape, the adhesive coating securing the splice tape to the leading end portion of one web and to the trailing end portion of another web such that the splice tape extends transversely to the webs across a majority of the width of the webs such that a continuous web is formed.

23. (Amended) The heat shrinkable label according to claim 22 wherein the webs and the splice tape have longitudinal and lateral shrinkage characteristics selected to provide longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs such that, upon application of heat to the splice tape and adjacent portions of the webs, printing distortion due to differential shrinkage between the splice tape and the adjacent portions of the webs will be substantially limited.

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## REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are pending in the present application. In response to the restriction requirement, the applicants have provisionally elected, with traverse, Group I of the claim grouping identified by the Examiner. The above claim amendments, however, have rendered the Examiner's grouping inapplicable to the claims of the present application. Each of claims 1-23, as amended, is directed to a ***label for a container***. A continued requirement for restriction, therefore, would be improper. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the requirement for restriction and examination of claims 1-23 in the present application.

For the purposes of preserving the argument for the record, the applicants also traverse the present restriction requirement, as it applied to the claims filed with the present application, as being ***contradicted by the prosecution history***. In application 09/064,658, which